

Augustine Bridge
Spanning Brandywine Creek on the Augustine Cut-Off
portion of New Castle Road 49
Wilmington
New Castle County
Delaware

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Augustine Bridge

DE-20

Location: Spanning Brandywine Creek, part of the Augustine Cut-Off portion of New Castle Road 49 connecting U. S. Route 202 and Pennsylvania Avenue in Wilmington, New Castle County, Delaware.

Date of Construction: 1883-1885, as railroad bridge; modified in 1920 for automobile traffic.

Present Owner: State of Delaware, Division of Highways.

Present Use: Closed to all traffic as of May 22, 1979.

Significance: Wrought iron, pin-connected, Pratt-type truss superstructure mounted on granite masonry piers; originally served as bridge for the B & O Railroad.

Historian: Faye Stocum, 1979

HISTORICAL SUMMARY - AUGUSTINE BRIDGE

Originally constructed for the B&O Railroad between 1883 and 1885, the contract was let on July 14, 1883 to Andrews & Locke, of Baltimore, contractors for Section 31 of the Baltimore and Philadelphia Railroad (B&O). Stone for the abutments came from the quarry of John Riddle Sons & Company, a short distance up the Brandywine River. Work on setting the truss spans began in early 1885 with the last span being completed on May 15, 1885. The single track railroad bridge was turned over to the Operating Department of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad on May 25, 1885. The first freight train crossed the bridge on July 11, 1886 and the first passenger train crossed on September 11, 1886. All of the B&O railroad records of the original design and construction were destroyed in the Baltimore fire of 1904. The bridge was supplanted by an adjacent double deck stone arch bridge on December 11, 1910 as a result of an increase in the weight of the locomotive and freight trains and an increase in the volume of railroad traffic. The bridge and its right-of-way was exchanged for other adjoining property by the Mayor and Council of the City of Wilmington on May 20, 1911. In 1920, the New Castle County Levy Court took over the ownership of the structure and converted it to vehicular traffic by placing the present concrete deck on the truss superstructure. In 1935 the bridge became part of the Division of Highways' system. In 1967, when traffic reached its peak of 20,100 vehicles per day on the bridge, the Division of Highways performed an investigation of the structural integrity of the superstructure. As a result of that study, an eight ton limit was imposed on the bridge in March of 1968. The Department subsequently hired a consultant to more thoroughly investigate the

structural capacity of the superstructure. In consideration of the recommendation of the consultant to terminate use of the bridge, the Department further restricted the loading of the bridge by banning all truck traffic. The Department also hired American Bridge Company to make repairs to the sway braces, spacer rings, bottom chords, bearing assemblies, lacing bars, etc. to hopefully extend the life of the structure until a decision could be made regarding the disposition of the bridge. On May 22nd of this year, the bridge was closed to all traffic. Except for minor maintenance repairs and painting the supporting piers and trusses remain today as they were construction in 1885.